

Agroforestry - Forestland Grazing

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Combining the production of pines and cattle on improved pasture offers an opportunity for multiple-commodity yields. Additional timber can be produced by planting closer within the rows and planting double rows with wide spacing, to increase tree density while maintaining open stands for grass production between rows.

Cutting hay from the land while waiting for the trees to reach an animal-resistant and pest-resistant height offers an opportunity that needs to be used in an agroforestry management system. Since this approach to agroforestry is not trouble-free, good management is required.

Landowners, especially those with small holdings, should consider integrating pines, pasture, and cattle as an alternative to single-commodity management of their land.

OPERATION DESCRIPTION AND MANAGEMENT

Step 1: Originally the cow herd was mostly 1/4 to 1/2 Brahman cross cows. This enabled me to take advantage of increased hybrid vigor and foraging ability over straight English cross cows. In recent years the cow herd has been changed to mostly Longhorn cattle. This change was made due to the increased need for roping and dogging steers in the Florida Panhandle. The calf crop are presently sold for recreational use at about one year of age.

The breeding season lasts from April 1 through July 28. Calving begins about the second week of January to take advantage of ryegrass and crimson clover production.

Step 2: The operation includes both solid set timber (8'x10' spacing) and wide-row set timber (4'x8'x40' spacing). Trees are planted in an east-west row alignment for maximum sunlight exposure on grass. The wide-row spacing area includes 50 acres, consisting of 30 acres of Pensacola Bahia grass, 15 acres of slash pines, and 5 acres of ramps, cow pens, water area, and shade.

Step 3: Timber management has included using prescribed burning every 3 years to hold down

accumulation of pine straw. The first year of burning should be 6 to 7 years after planting. Thinning occurs first at 10 to 12 years post-planting, and every 5 years thereafter.

Step 4: Hay production from the bahia grass between the 40-ft.-wide rows of pine trees is excellent for the first 4 years.

Step 5: Facilities include portable cow pens and high-tensile electric fencing. Interior fencing is generally one wire, placed between rows of trees.